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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

SUCCESS STORY

Improving the Electoral Process by Simplification

Simplifying procedures on Election Day is the key to ensure accuracy and transparency in final tabulation of votes.



Poll-workers count ballots after the referendum on the new Constitution in June 2010.

USAID's assistance in electoral reform efforts have led to a simplification of the election protocols, ensuring an easier and more straightforward means to count, tabulate and report election results at the precinct and territorial levels.

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When it comes to running elections keeping it simple is usually the best course of action. Over the course of 16 years in Kyrgyzstan, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has continuously advocated for a simplification of election management procedures. The need for simplification rests largely on the fact that each national election requires the recruitment and training of over 20,000 election officials; high turnover and frequent legal changes necessitate large-scale training in preparation of every electoral event. The more straightforward the laws, guidelines and instructions are, the easier they are to follow, which helps ensure maximum understanding and compliance. This in turn allows elections to be more easily monitored, disputes to be resolved quicker and the credibility of the elections to be improved by better efficiency and accuracy.

No instructional form is more vital to elections in Kyrgyzstan than the election protocol. The protocol is the tool used to record all activity at the polling station on Election Day: names of election commission members, number of voters on the voters list, number of issued ballots—and most importantly the number of votes cast for candidates. While the information seems basic, the form officials used for years was overly complex and resulted in many avoidable mistakes made in the recording of results. With new election laws put in place in June 2011, IFES was asked to lead a Working Group to determine the procedures and provisions through which the Central Election Commission should apply the new requirements in accordance with the law. IFES took this opportunity to make the case for a new protocol.

IFES designed a shortened and simplified election protocol that was adopted by the CEC on August 22, 2011 in preparation for the presidential election on October 30, 2011. The number of data entry lines was reduced from 17 to 8, with voting results placed on the first line of entry rather than the thirteenth, as previously organized. Confusing and repetitive lines were also removed, in particular two lines that asked for the same data in different ways.

Ensuring that straightforward procedures are in place will help to make the process not only familiar to election officials but also accessible, and ultimately acceptable to Kyrgyz voters. The new protocol is a key example of success in this endeavor.